

Economics



*"The official definitions of progress confuse
'more' with 'better,' 'costs' with 'gains,'
'borrowing' with 'earnings,' and 'means' with 'ends.'
To achieve real progress we must
learn to distinguish these again."*

– Sagoff, 1997

Everyone knows that a little extra money in the pocket today does not guarantee long-term prosperity. This concept also applies to a community. For example, one that looks well-off may be doing well for the moment. However, its long-term economic growth may not be as strong. Stable employment and growing incomes support communities for the near future. Investing wisely as well as developing diverse businesses and industries helps to sustain communities for the longer term.

Communities need constant investment for their futures with savings, resources, education and improved infrastructure.

The relationship between economic status and health is commonly accepted¹. Numerous studies have documented that lower family income is significantly associated with poorer physical and mental health status, less social support, more behavioral risk factors, higher rates of obesity and uncontrolled blood pressure, and poor medical diagnoses.

After accounting for other factors, including baseline health status, family income is a significant predictor of health status². The impact of a family's economics on a variety of health concerns is well described in studies. For instance, studies in asthma,³ rural women's health,⁴ and low birth weights⁵ document a relationship to family income. Therefore, one way to improve community health is to work to improve community wealth.

A community needs to know its status in order to make improvements. Understanding a community's economic status is a complex task. One of the many ways to begin is to think of the community as if it were an individual. A person looks at earnings, costs and resources to understand personal finances. A single indicator or piece of data does not contain the breadth of economic activities in a community. It is important to look at a wide collection of

DID YOU KNOW?

There has been an increased acceptance of the relationship of social-economic status and health. For instance:

- "In the past five years, 193 papers addressing the socioeconomic status and health have appeared in scientific journals - twice the number in the previous five-year period."
- "The National Institutes of Health, last year, declared research on disparities in health related to social class or minority status one of its highest priorities..."

-New York Times. 1999.

Why Poverty Matters	
Outcomes	Low-Income Children's Higher Risk
Health	
Death in infancy	1.6 times as likely
Premature birth (under 37 weeks)	1.8 times as likely
Low birthweight	1.9 times as likely
No regular source of health care	2.7 times as likely
Inadequate prenatal care	2.8 times as likely
Family had too little food sometime in the last 4 months	8 times as likely
Education	
Math scores at ages 7 to 8	5 test points lower
Reading scores at ages 7 to 8	4 test points lower
Repeated a grade	2.0 times as likely
Expelled from school	3.4 times as likely
Being a dropout at ages 16 to 24	3.5 times as likely
Finishing a four-year college	Half as likely

¹Defining Poverty and Why it Matters for Children," Children's Defense Fund, August 2004

indicators, and even the ones that are presented here may not be the best answers to local questions.

The way data are collected or reported defines the manner in which the information may be used. A wide variety of indicators can more clearly outline the overall economic health of a community.

Analyzing indicators can help direct decisions on planning, taxing, investing and prioritizing improvements in a community. For example, an increase in the number of people who are served in homeless shelters may drive the decision to add another shelter. A community might also choose to

develop rent subsidies to keep families with low incomes in housing. Another example of a chosen indicator helping direct community development could be a report of increased investments in a local industry. The community might respond by planning training in local community colleges to prepare workers.

Once residents of a community have identified the indicators they believe measure the appropriate factors in their economy, they can use them to outline the steps that need to be taken to build economic growth. The following topics are discussed in this chapter.

- Per capita personal income (PCPI)
- Poverty
- Median household income
- Migration to or from the parish
- Diversification of employed population
- Unemployment
- Leading industries international investment
- Cost of living
- Housing and utilities
- Homelessness
- Transportation
- Investment in people – social capital

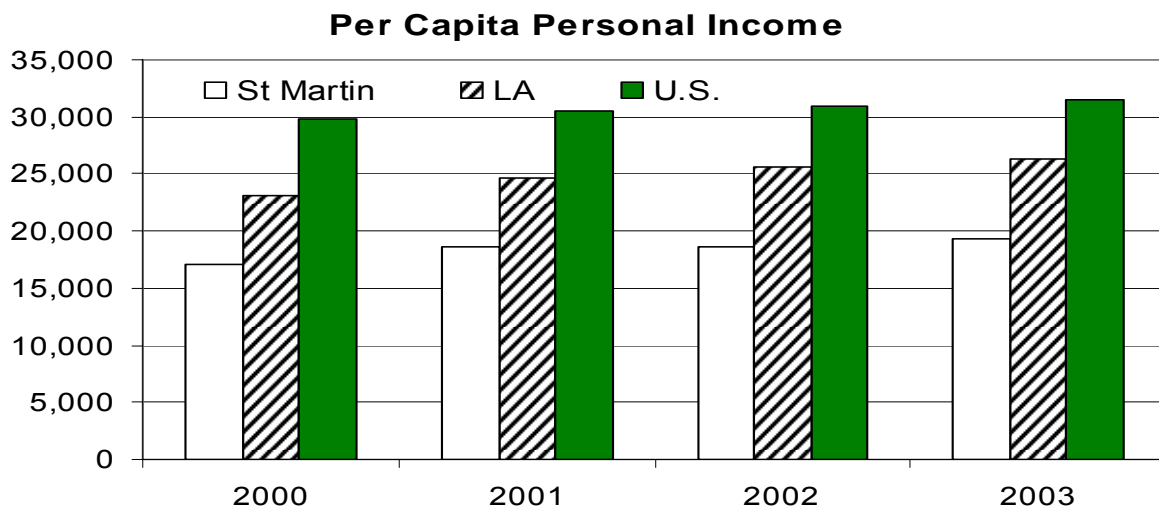
DID YOU KNOW?

Louisiana ranks eighth in the country in gross state product, ranked by percent change.

Bureau of Economic Analysis, 2004

Per Capita Personal Income

Per capita personal income is the average dollars earned per person in a parish or state. According to data from the Bureau of Economic Analysis, **St. Martin parish had a per capita personal income of \$19,252; ranking the parish 51st in the state for 2003.⁶** For the same year, Louisiana's average PCPI was \$26,312; ranking the state 43rd in the nation. The average PCPI for the U.S. was \$31,472 for 2003.

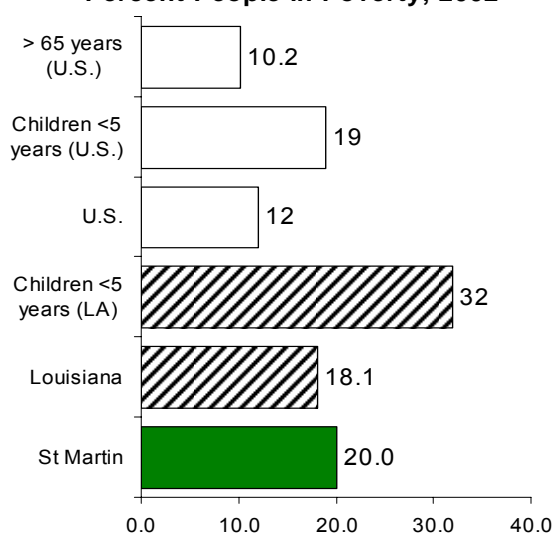


Source: Bureau of Economic Analysis, 2004 Survey of Current Business

Poverty

Latest poverty rates for the nation show 35.9 million people lived in poverty in 2002.^{7 8} This number reflects an increase from 12.1 percent in 2002 to 12.5 percent in 2003.⁹ Data from the Census Bureau's Small Area Income and Poverty Estimates, show that there were 797,255 people living in poverty in Louisiana; 18.1 percent of the state's population.¹⁰ For **St. Martin parish in 2002, 20.0 percent of people were in poverty**. Children are the largest subgroup of the population below the poverty line. Census data (2002) show 32.1 percent of all children under the age of 5 in Louisiana lived in poverty. The national estimate for children under 5 was 19 percent (2002).¹¹ For people over the age of 65, the national poverty rate is 10.2 percent.¹²

Percent People in Poverty, 2002

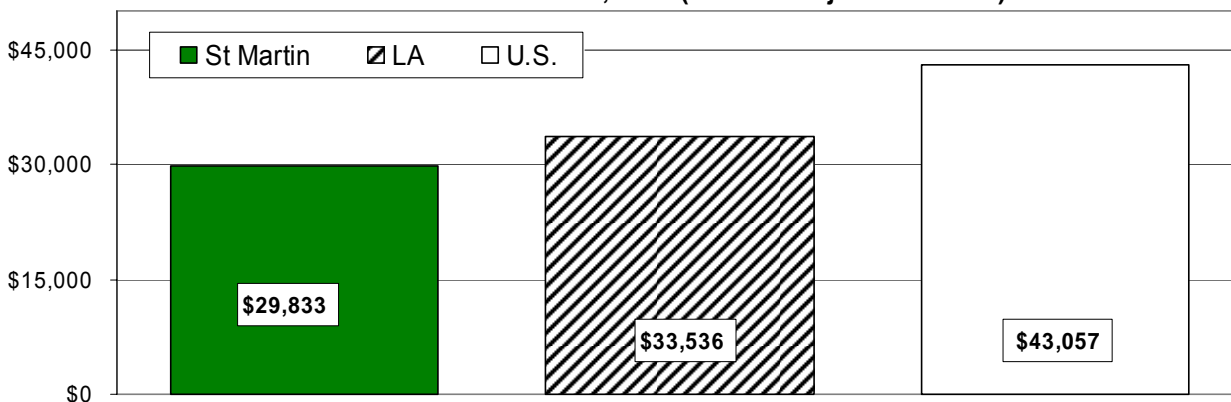


Sources: U.S. Bureau of the Census, 2003 ACS Survey; U. S. Census Bureau, Housing and Household Economic Statistics Division, Small Area Estimates Branch, December 2004

Median Household Income

When studied over time, several national trends may help to explain the increased inequity between top and bottom incomes of society. These include the national decline of trade unions that work to narrow the difference between workers' and managers' incomes, a drop in well-paying manufacturing jobs, the growth of the number of college-educated workers, the rising number of single-parent households, the increased competition for unskilled labor with immigrant populations and the decline in the real value of the minimum wage. It is important for social cohesion that as wide of a range as possible of social levels benefit from programs of improvement in a community. An increase in either income or education, or both, increases the likelihood of being in good health. The wealth of a community translates to the health. Income inequality from 2002 to 2003 has remained relatively unchanged nationally.¹³

Median Household Income, 2002 (Inflation-adjusted Dollars)



Sources: Census Bureau, Small Area Income and Poverty Estimates; USDA-Economic Research Service, 9 December 2004

Migration

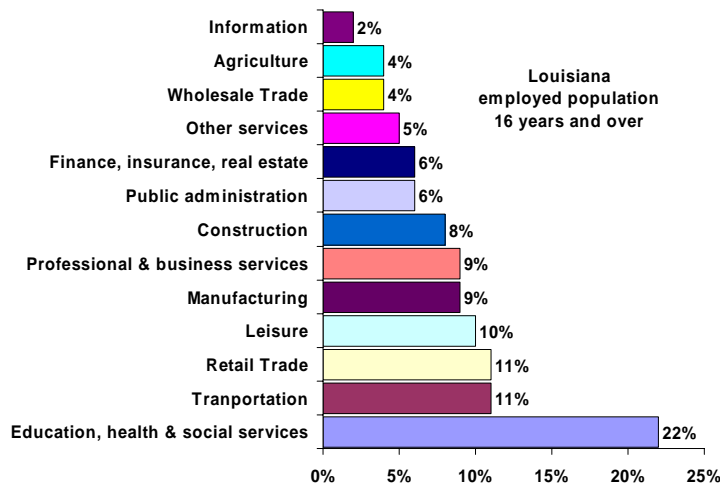
Migration is the movement of people across a specified boundary to establish a new permanent residence. Movement between countries, states or counties is considered migration. Movement within a county or parish is considered "local movement."¹⁴ Movement of residents in and out of a community is one way to measure the ability of a community to support the people who live in it. The effect of migration on a local economy should be considered in combination with other factors. For instance, it may be that new people are not moving into a parish, yet at the same time PCPI can still be increasing for the residents. Conversely, a community can have an influx of new residents but they might be getting low-paying jobs that have little potential for advancement.

St Martin	Population	% Change	Net Domestic Migration
1991	44,267	0.4	-440
1992	44,694	1	-66
1993	45,146	1	-81
1994	45,956	1.8	357
1995	46,010	0.1	-352
1996	46,523	1.1	107
1997	47,234	1.5	273
1998	47,935	1.5	237
1999	48,285	0.7	-178
2000	48,583	0.6	*
2001	49,059	1	26
2002	49,479	0.9	67
2003	49,911	0.9	77

Sources: Real Estate Center at Texas A&M University, <http://recenter.tamu.edu/econ/>; U.S. Bureau of the Census, Note: Decade years represent April 1, Census data, not the mid-year estimates; * Data not available for Louisiana parishes in 2000

Diversification¹⁵

In the rapidly changing economy of today, one of the best assurances to earning a decent wage is having many skills. This is also what Louisiana is doing by diversifying. The main elements of the Louisiana economy are mineral production, petroleum refining, chemical and petrochemical manufacturing, tourism, forestry, pulp, plywood, papermaking, agriculture,



Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, 2003 ACS Survey

food processing, commercial fishing, shipping, international trade, ship building and general manufacturing.

Louisiana's 19 petroleum industries produce 16.9 billion gallons of gasoline a year. This makes the state the 2nd largest refiner of petroleum in the U.S. Annual production by more than 100 petrochemical plants in the state is valued at more than \$19.6 billion.¹⁶ The aerospace, aviation and biotechnology industries are

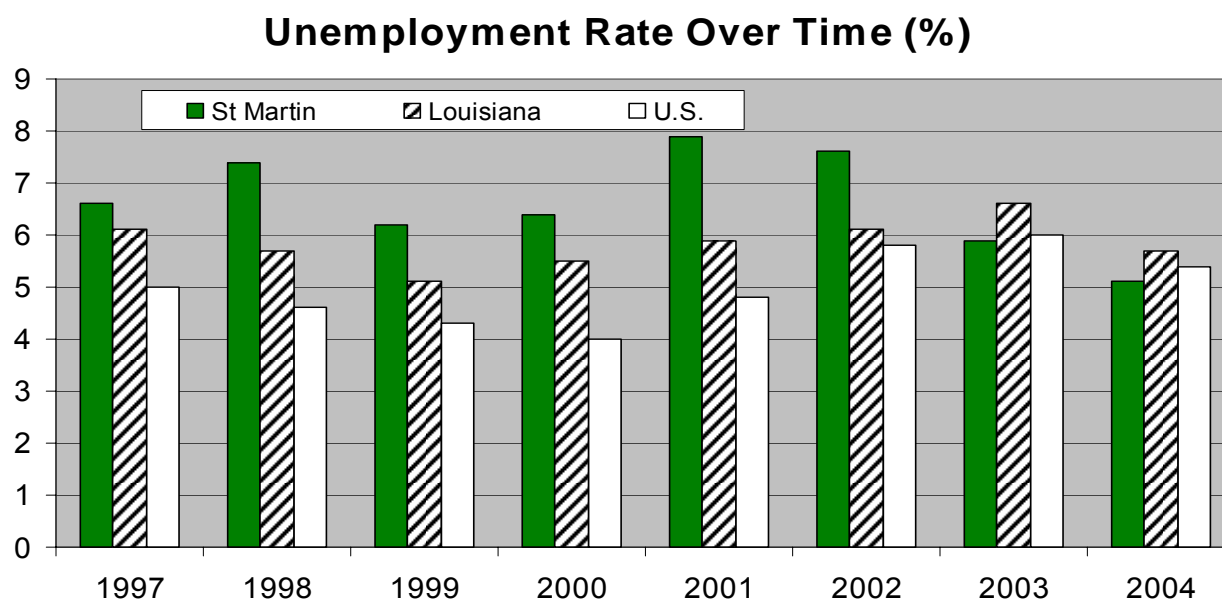
also adding to Louisiana's diversification.

Louisiana's natural resources include 11 percent of U.S. petroleum reserves and 19 percent of the country's reserves of natural gas. It also is the largest producer of salt in America and a major producer of sulphur, lime and silica sands. In addition, Louisiana has an estimated 310

to 330 million tons of lignite. The total value of all mineral production in the state is the second highest in the U.S.¹⁷ Louisiana has had a long history of economic volatility. Increased diversification of Louisiana's economy will help blunt the impact of the ups and downs of any one sector.

Unemployment Rate¹⁸

Many people think that industry growth translates into an impact on a state's or parish's work force in terms of the unemployment rate. This is a statistic used to describe the proportion of a population which is not currently employed. The poverty that can result from unemployment is more than just a statistic. It affects people's lives and health. Like all indicators it has some limitations. The unemployment rate is a ratio composed of the number of persons believed to be unemployed divided by the number believed to be in the civilian labor force in a given region. The unemployment rate is included here because many people refer to it as a measure of economic performance. It is not a simple measurement.



Sources: U.S. Bureau of Land Statistics, Local Area Unemployment Statistics (LAUS) data.

When the economy is weak, people may think the unemployment rate should be high, and that a strong economy leads to low unemployment rates. Several factors counter these beliefs:

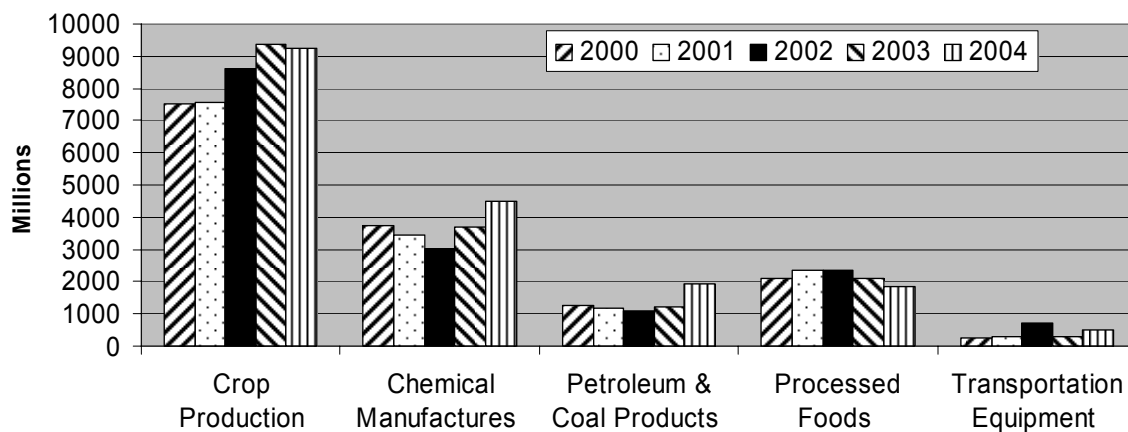
- When the economy is good, more people will come into a region to find work. These new job seekers will be recorded in the unemployed statistics.
- Job seekers who become discouraged and stop looking for work will not be included in the statistics, although they continue to be unemployed. Other people who are not recorded in the statistics are nonworking students, retirees, institutionalized persons and homemakers.
- Other events to consider are: people returning to school in times of poor employment, seasonal fluctuations and the workforce that works for undeclared pay.¹⁹

The unemployment rate is a good example of the need for the use of caution and multiple indicators when trying to define measures in a community's economic status.²⁰ Parish unemployment rates can fluctuate widely over time.

International Investment and Export Trade

The Louisiana Department of Economic Development reports that international holdings in Louisiana total nearly \$21 billion. This is the ninth largest investment among all the states in the U.S.²¹ The U.S. Department of Commerce and Office of Trade and Economic Analysis reported that between 2000 and 2004, Louisiana exported \$19.9 billion in products to the world.²² For the same years percentage increases occurred for crop production, 22.7 percent, chemical manufacturers, 19.8 percent, and petroleum and coal products, 50.0 percent.

Louisiana's Top Five Exports to the World Over Time



Source: U.S. Department of Commerce, Office of Trade and Industry Information, International Trade Administration

Cost of Living

Smart budgeters know where their money is going and try to control spending to fit their earnings. There are key measures that a community can use to collectively approximate costs. The cost of living measured through the Consumer Price Index (CPI) is usually the most common measure of costs. Also, there are the costs of housing, utilities and transportation.

DID YOU KNOW?

Most of the fastest growing states in 2003 are states that have large concentrations of farming and/or mining activity, including Louisiana.

Bureau of Economic Analysis

The American Chamber of Commerce Researchers Association (ACCRA) is used to measure the cost of living in metropolitan statistical areas. Alexandria, Baton Rouge, Houma, St. Martin, Lake Charles, Monroe, New St. Martin, and Shreveport make up the MSA in Louisiana.²³ Cost of living is calculated by combining the prices of a number of commonly purchased goods and services. It is usually reported quarterly. CPI is the statistic that people are more likely to hear quoted in the news. The CPI is not calculated by state, but by region. Louisiana is one of 16 states in the Southern region. The CPI is more useful for national price trends. All of this adds up to a national and state economy with a stable cost of living, consistent levels of production and low inflation. The average consumer can expect few price increases at the checkout stand as a result.

Housing and Utilities

In general, in the 1990s, construction increased in Louisiana. **As of the 2000 U.S. Census, one of the traditional sources of housing information, there were 20,245 total housing units in St. Martin Parish.**²⁴ Estimates from the U.S. Census Bureau found that the percentage of families who could afford a moderately-priced house in the area where they

live was about 58 percent (30 year fixed rate mortgage, five percent down). Most of the families who were renting could not buy due to excessive debt and too little income for a mortgage.²⁵

Unfortunately, national data²⁶ show that some populations have carried a greater cost burden for housing over recent years. The technical definition of affordable

Selected Housing Characteristics St. Martin Parish, 2000

- Total housing units in St. Martin20,245
- Percent occupied 84.8%
- Heated by gas..... 32.2%
- Heated by electricity 62.3%
- Median monthly cost of mortgage\$669
- Median monthly cost of rent\$353

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2000 Summary File 3, American FactFinder

housing is housing which costs 30 percent or less of a family's income. In 1975, the percent of U.S. households with children that spent 30 percent or more on housing was 28 percent. By 1995, that percentage increased to 42 percent. The percentage of renters during the same span of years paying 30 percent or more for housing increased from 59 to 68 percent.

Homelessness²⁷

The rates of homelessness are important for communities to measure because they describe people who are not in stable living situations. Homeless people in particular are also physically and emotionally vulnerable to poor health and quality of life, and are often excluded from community life. Unfortunately, many social services, privileges of citizenship such as voting, and some basic health care are available only when people have a residence. People staying in homeless shelters can receive some of those services.

Homeless Need Assessment Survey, 2004

Louisiana

Grant funding	\$19,314,526
Number of shelters.....	155
Shelters responding to survey.....	97%
Number reported homeless in 2004.....	45,165
• Adults served (18 years and older)	38,401
• Youth (5 to 17 years).....	4,139
• Children (less than 5)	2,625
Combined daily shelter capacity	5,045

St. Martin

Grant funding (includes St. Martin, St. Martin, Plaquemines, and St. Bernard parishes)	\$2,175,572
Number of shelters (2004)	1
Number Responding to Survey	1
Daily Capacity - Responding Shelters	15
# of served in a 12 month period (unduplicated)	86
• Adults served (18 years and older)	30
• Youth (5 to 17 years).....	42
• Children (less than 5)	14

Source: Louisiana Interagency Council for the Homeless, 2004

Transportation

Public transportation provides people with mobility and access to employment, community resources, medical care, and recreational opportunities in communities across America. It benefits those who choose to ride, as well as those who have no other choice.²⁸ More than 90 percent of public assistance recipients do not own a car and must rely on public transportation. Public transit provides a basic mobility service to these persons and to all others without access to a car.²⁹ In the U.S. according to the 2000 census,

75.7 percent of commuters drove alone. About 12.2 percent of commuters carpooled and 4.7 percent used public transportation. The average commute in the U.S. was 25.5 minutes.³⁰ The patterns of commuting are similar in Louisiana. In 2000, 78.1 percent of commuters drove alone while 13.6 percent used carpools. About 2.4 percent used public transportation. The average commute in Louisiana was 25.7 minutes.³¹ **In St. Martin parish 78.9 percent of commuters drove alone. About 14.8 percent carpooled and 0.4 percent used public transportation.**³²

It is difficult to represent the costs of transportation, since there is no one agency that oversees transportation, nor is there one manner of travel. Reliable transportation improves quality of life, reduces the cost of living, and makes work more accessible. For example, people can reduce their shopping costs by getting to stores with lower prices and more choices of foods. They can get to a clinic and reduce the time they must take off to go to see a doctor. There are many people who can not afford a car.

St. Martin Parish, 2000

Vehicles

- Without vehicle 10.9%
- At least one vehicle..... 33.9%
- At least two vehicles 41.5%

Commuters

- Drove alone 78.9%
- Carpooled 14.8%
- Public Transportation 0.4%
- Mean travel time to work 30 minutes

Telephones

- Number without telephone service 1,090
- Percent without telephone service..... 6.4%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2000 Summary File 3, American FactFinder

DID YOU KNOW?

Louisiana is a predominantly urban state. More than two-thirds of all Louisianans live in eight metropolitan areas. These include, in addition to New St. Martin, Baton Rouge, the state capital and a center of education, government, petrochemical production and petroleum refining; Shreveport, the commercial, distribution and manufacturing center of northwest Louisiana; St. Martin, the oil and gas center and unofficial "capital" of St. Martinna; Alexandria, central Louisiana's wood products and distribution center; Monroe, the manufacturing, distribution and commercial center of northeastern Louisiana; Lake Charles, the major petrochemical, agricultural and port city in southwestern Louisiana and Houma/Thibodaux, the oil exploration, seafood and agricultural center of the southern coastal region of the state. Louisiana Department of Economic Development

Investments in People – Social Capital

Investing in people takes many forms in a community. Like a business, these kinds of investments are capital improvements. Some of the obvious investments are those reflected in the titles of the sections of this book: Education, Chronic Disease, and Access and Equity. Some investments form the invisible glue that keeps communities vital, sometimes called

social capital. How community members decide to measure their social capital is only limited by the creativity of their ideas. Social capital can include all the varied efforts that keep a community united. The social capital building activities of churches, recreation, art, charity, music, camps, scenery, equitable justice and income lead to renewed hope, joy, trust and belief in the future.

The standard data collected by government agencies or by formal processes does not reach into the phenomenon of a community's social capital. Social capital can be an important element of the long term resolution of local concerns. One local activist recently told the story of a rural Louisiana community. Each month the community would hold a party attended by the majority of the residents. It was always a potluck tied to a local event, such as a baseball game or school graduation. Those get-togethers built social capital. The effort put into the community potlucks made that small town a place where people enjoyed living despite hardships. Investments in social capital can begin to counterbalance the events and histories that have given rise to difficult situations in communities.

Survey: Economic Confidence Rising, Education Still a Problem

An increasing number of Louisiana residents are expressing confidence in the state's economic future, but most still believe that an overall lousy economy and poorly performing public schools create an image problem nationwide, according to a new Louisiana State University survey. The survey indicated that Louisiana residents think out-of-staters have a negative image of Louisiana's business and political climate, which hurts the state's economy. Some of the findings were encouraging, said members of LSU's Reilly Center for Media & Public Affairs, which conducted the study. For example,

- 52 percent of those polled believe the state is moving in the right direction, up from 48 percent in 2004.
- The survey dealt with personal finances, as well as perceptions of the state and national economies. Some respondents reported that all three categories had improved during the past 12 months.
- Only 27 percent said the state's economy had improved in that time, but that was a substantial improvement over the 16 percent who gave the same answer the year before.
- Unchanged from the previous two surveys was that most residents named education as the state's most pressing problem.
- Jobs and the economy came in second, followed by health care.
- The 34 percent citing education as the most important issue marked an increase from 31 percent in 2004.
- The percentage selecting the jobs and the economy fell from 26.5 percent in 2004 to 18.9 percent in 2005.
- The portion choosing health care increased slightly from 12 percent in 2004 to 14 percent in 2005.
- Questions soliciting opinions about economic development and Louisiana's image were new. About 53 percent reported that they believed the image others had of Louisiana was either negative or very negative and an identical 53 percent said that image hurt when it comes to attracting business to Louisiana.
- Respondents said improvements in public education, health care, and infrastructure all were needed to advance the state. But they stressed that improving public schools is the best thing Louisiana can do to attract business.
- When asked about the quality of Louisiana's work force compared to other states, 43 percent said the work force in Louisiana was less skilled, while 33 percent said it was about the same and 10 percent said it was better.

The 2005 Louisiana Survey was conducted by phone with 964 randomly selected Louisiana residents 18 or older. They were polled between Dec. 6, 2004 and Feb. 21, 2005. The survey included several split-ballot questions in which approximately half of the respondents were asked a particular series of questions, while the other half of respondents were asked a different series of questions. The approximate margin of error for the overall survey was 3.2 percentage points and 4.6 percentage points for the split-ballot questions.

Source: By Michelle Z. Spielman, The Public Policy Research Lab is a partnership of the Manship School of Mass Communication's Reilly Center for Media & Public Affairs and the E. J. Ourso College of Business.

The Community Can ...

Arrange for Community Organizers^{33,34}

- Engage a broad spectrum of community members of different ages, ethnicities, organizational affiliations, and community sectors (e.g., parents, religious groups) who are affected by and essential to addressing the problem or goal.³⁵
- Target political leaders, opinion-makers, the general public, and persons who control resources to improve the political and social climate for collaboration.³⁶
- Community organizers can play a critical role in establishing inter-organizational linkages.³⁷
- Pay particular attention to taking action and following-up on action plans.³⁸

Toolkits & Guides

Community Toolbox - Includes practical guidance for the different tasks necessary to promote community health and development. For instance, there are sections on leadership, strategic planning, community assessment, grant writing, and evaluation to give just a few examples. Each section includes a description of the task, advantages of doing it, step-by-step guidelines, examples, checklists of points to review, and training materials.

ctb.ku.edu/tools/bp/en/tools_bp_sub_section_52.jsp

Introduction and Model for Community Programming and Evaluation

ag.arizona.edu/fcs/cyfernet/nowg/comm_index.html

Guide to Community Preventive Services: Systematic Reviews and Evidence Based Recommendations, www.thecommunityguide.org

Assure Technical Assistance³⁹

Community researchers and practitioners have repeatedly expressed the need for timely and accessible technical assistance to support the often complex process of community change and improvement.

- Overcome geographical, economic, and other barriers for addressing needs by working with innovative (e.g., Internet-based) support systems.
- Connect external and internal human resources with particular expertise for addressing needs.
- Enhance participation by providing needed supports and increasing access to essential member resources. This process can build capacity for action by building capacity of members, and also create a shared skills-base or common ground for taking collaborative action.

Toolkits & Guides:

Collaboration Framework – Addressing Community Capacity: Cooperative State Research, Education, and Extension Service (CSREES), USDA, created five National Networks to marshal faculty and program resources to directly respond to the economic, social, and human stresses faced by children, youth and families. crs.uvm.edu/ncco/collab/framework.html

Institute for Community Economics, www.iceclt.org/loanfund/loaninvest.html

A tool for community groups to assess their readiness for economic development.
http://text.lsuagcenter.com/en/community/economic_dev/community_planning_tools/

Adopt sustainable development as a strategy for well-being; sustainable projects⁴⁰

- Strengthen your local economy.
- Improve and protect the quality of the environment.
- Enhance the quality of life and the well-being of all of the people in your community.

Toolkits & Guides:

Smart Communities Network: Creating Energy Smart Communities - U.S. Department of Energy's Smart Communities Network, www.sustainable.doe.gov/welcome.shtml, <http://www.coscda.org/aboutcoscda.asp>

Develop Communities Social Capital on Transportation Matters⁴¹

- Promote communities' connections with local planning councils, federal and state departments' of transportation, and transportation providers
- Undertake community outreach activities to allow communities that are affected by the transportation changes to have early input into the planning process by holding educational meetings to invite public comments before public hearings are held.
- Encourage continuing dialogue on the issues the proposed transportation projects raise for the community.⁴²

Toolkits & Guides:

Center on Budget and Policy Priorities - Frequently-Asked Questions About Public Job Creation (i.e. How job creation programs help communities?), <http://www.cbpp.org/pjc-faq.htm>

Employment Transportation Toolkit – Designed to help publicly-funded workforce agencies link workers with transportation services to employment and training sites. <http://www.ctaa.org/ntrc>, keywords, "employment transportation, tool kits".

Strengthen the capability of local people in rural communities to act collectively to achieve commonly held goals⁴³

- Create the opportunity for people to participate as the main players in the process of identifying and tackling community problems.
- Provide education and opportunity to overcome the problem where the disadvantaged community members accept that the advantaged have the most power.
- Reorganize the community to break out of ingrained patterns of patronage and exclusion and focus collective efforts on problems common to all local groupings.
- Mobilize resources both within and outside the locality.
- Allow for informed decision making.
- Create action – Initial community action builds the capacity for subsequent community actions as it creates networks, roles, and a pool of shared experience.

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Percent	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004
St Martin	6.6	7.4	6.2	6.4	7.9	7.6	5.9	5.1
Louisiana	6.1	5.7	5.1	5.5	5.9	6.1	6.6	5.7
U. S.	5	4.6	4.3	4	4.8	5.8	6	5.4

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